Minutes for ACCU Committee meeting

18th July 2021, via Google Meet

Meeting started at 14.30.

1. Attending

Robin Williams, Roger Orr, Bob Schmidt, Geoff Daniels, Guy Davidson, Ralph McArdell, Phil Nash, Robert Pauer

Apologies for absence

Felix Petriconi, Matt Jones, Patrick Martin, Adeel Nadeem, Jim Hague

2. Minutes from last meetings

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting

3. Actions in progress

Note: the Google Sheet for actions is here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1RMTorasYR_A94VBjv-Dn6ghhTVWLbW0w1ekhN994qFI

Actions from previous meetings:

122	Patrick: update the very old advertising card - get ad server stats and web visits from Bob and Jim
140	Phil: write up and pass round his suggestions for local group affiliations
143	Patrick: suggestions to define some central storage solution for ACCU documents. etc. consider GDPR - talk to Rob Pauer
146	Phil: Local groups: propose to add "affiliated groups" section underneath - Phil to send details to Bob
153	Patrick: to investigate setting up the safety account for the Paypal payments
177	Patrick: clarify some Consitutional points: e.g. "Honorary Auditor"? and is the AGM announcement timeline still relevant? - Review / canvas for others
178	Matt & Adeel: check with AYA that discounts available to corporate members are affordable, update corporate membership factsheet with this, and on change to voting noted in minutes.

122: Patrick: I have done some sums and updated the draft Advertising card for 2 main things - wobbly discount rates and quotes for colour ads - thanks to Ralph and other commenters.

I think it looks pretty good, but I am agnostic as to how those absolute rates look - please bear in mind, there is some wriggle room in the rates we charge, compared to the printing costs, so if anyone has some surefire recommendations for appealing discount rates and the like, please make this known as we possibly have the option to accommodate changes without making a loss.

Robin will email Patrick/Adeel to confirm offline

140: Phil: Will revisit proposal for affiliated groups and distribute to accu-committee. Ralph -- contact

possible volunteer about talk on accessibility?

143: Documents: Patrick: no recent progress.

146: Phil: will forward list to Bob Schmidt when available.

153: Paypal: Patrick: no recent progress.

178: Matt: Charlotte said there's no problem with unlimited corporate attendance. So it's a green light from AYA. Closed.

Actions added by this meeting:

179: Robin -- e-mail Patrick/Adeel to confirm we're all happy with advertising rates.

180: Patrick -- confirm when advertising contract comes up for renewal.

181: Roger -- discuss colour printing with journal editors and Alison Peck.

182: Patrick -- Discuss YouTube channel promotion & monetization with Jim Roper.

183: Adeel -- Contact Fran to confirm whether study group suggestion is still of interest.

4. Reports

4.1 Advertising

Geoff: QBS point of contact has moved on, with no update from new person in the role.

Phil: raised possible additional source of advertising. Will contact Patrick for Media Pack to share with interested party.

Need to check with Patrick that current contract is being paid, and when it comes up for renewal (180).

4.2 Conference

Felix: The next conference is currently planned as hybrid event. Partly on site, partly online. The call for papers is scheduled to begin in October. I will update the website soon with the dates. Discussing with AYA & Jim Roper.

Committee: Need to check navigation routes to conference website to ensure that links served by searches on DuckDuckGo point to relevant information.

4.3 Local Groups

Not many meetups have been organized, mostly ACCU Online (as rebranded ACCU London). In-person contact is seen as a major benefit which can't realistically be replicated on line. Phil will contact local group leaders to check status.

4.4 Membership

Matt Jones: I received membership numbers the other day, so up to date figures are here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_DBWE4ya54atjshmEMzA4qdWEa-bagJVc4A36u_YOpQ/edit?usp=sharing

The main thing to note is the security breach resulting in the membership site being turned off for several weeks. I have to commend the membership as a whole, in taking the announcement very calmly.

With the membership system off line, new joiners and address changes have not been possible, resulting in a steady trickle of enquiries. No memberships have expired in the meantime, although I expect when

we do turn the site back on, it will catch up and there will be a flurry of expiry & renewal.

I have used the previous CVu address files for this month, and manually applied a few changed addresses. I will do the same for August's Overload if necessary.

Bob has been working on moving membership functionality over to new website.

4.5 Treasurer

Patrick: There is not too much to report; the accounts are doing what they normally do, no cause for alarm. I invoiced AYA for the last conference, so we are most likely back to net positive cash flow.

Rob Pauer has mentioned that it would be timely to tidy up the list of signatories on the ACCU accounts, including removing himself. Geoff Daniels volunteered as additional signatory for the account.

4.6 Publicity & Social Media

Adeel: Nothing significant to report. I have started to post an ACCU conference video from our YouTube once a week on a Friday afternoon. Hopefully this will boost exposure and try to capitalise on the momentum we have with our YouTube channel.

4.7 Standards

Guy: 18 months from final text of next version, 6 months from first exposure freeze. New executive paper 2300 may prevent networking & executors being included in C++23 -- will discuss in next report due for September Overload. No clear plan for next face-to-face meeting, not clear whether short online meetings will end up being the new normal. This may exclude people in some geographical locations, however.

4.8 Website

Jim Hague:

4.8.1 Notification of Website security breach.

As you will be aware, on June 14th we received notification of an unspecified security breach in our members website (i.e. the old Xaraya website). The supporting evidence was a copy of the source for several of the PHP modules therein.

After consultation with some of the committee, I closed the members website, substituting a single holding static web page. I and Bytemark support examined the system, and found no obvious vulnerabilities or signs of unauthorised activity on the server. I also upgraded the server to current Debian stable from old-stable. In both configurations, the system was fully up to date with the sole exception being a reboot required for a new kernel version.

To summarise the situation as I understand it now, the source was obtained some time ago by a misconfiguration in the Apache config which allowed access to the .git directory in the website root. This misconfiguration was closed some time ago - I can't be precise, but certainly no later than September 2020.

In terms of sensitive information available in the source code, the sole item I can find is the username and password used to access the member data in MySQL. The MySQL (ok, MariaDB) server is configured to allow access to connections from localhost, so knowledge of the username and password requires server command line access. Unless there is a vulnerability, this is available only via public key SSH.

I feel that we should now think about re-enabling the member website. This requires some work - the Debian update updated PHP to 7.2, while the member website requires PHP5, but it should be possible to

run both as required (the wiki and World of Code sites now require PHP7 as a consequence of the Debian update). I suggest we change the password to the database as a precaution during this process.

I would like to know the committee's feeling on this.

4.8.2 Use of a new server.

In the previous committee meeting, Guy kindly offered use of a server for the main website. I have not been able to progress this to any significant degree - I've gone down a rabbit hole of wanting to deploy via a Docker image, which involves me learning something about Docker for a start, and coupled with starting a new job on the 16th of June my time has been far too limited.

The committee discussed the potential for using Docker to help with both this and with PHP versioning issues above. Phil offered to consult on Docker if that would be useful, which should make it easier to encapsulate the handling of configuration & security, based on existing scripts. The committee felt that moving things to Docker as part of the process of re-enablement made most sense.

4.9 Publications

Limited number of articles, possibly due to lockdown burnout. Quality of what is published seems good though, with some high-impact recent articles (e.g. by Bjarne Stroustrup). There was an unfortunate typographical error in a recent issue, which has been corrected online but an appropriate apology will need to be published. Will look into automated ways to protect against similar occurrences in future.

Patrick has floated the idea of "full colour, everywhere, all the time" for the magazines - it would be about £85 a month. Roger to discuss with journal editors and Alison Peck. Need to confirm the rates are genuinely this low for all colour as opposed to individual elements.

5. Any other business

5.1 Website security

See above.

5.2 YouTube channel promotion & monetization

Patrick proposed that we take the monetization revenues from Google and put them into the pot, to be used in the interests of the members, to the best of our abilities. Or if not, at least tell Jim Roper it's a firm no, for now.

The committee felt it made sense to enable monetization and review when this is running. Patrick to discuss this with Jim Roper. May be worth considering arranging a clearing account to pass on payments, rather than giving Google direct access to ACCU bank accounts.

5.3 Study group suggestion

Adeel: A while back, Fran passed on a query about study groups, specifically with regard to a book which Andreas Fertig is writing about C++20 on Leanpub. We used to do study groups working through a book, and sometimes got the author involved. She wondered if we can revive the study groups, and if Andreas is interested?

There is no current Study Group coordinator, and the current page is stale (with details copied over from previous website). Bob is happy to add additional lists. Need to contact Fran to confirm whether this is still of interest. Also need to look into archiving of information for longer term retrieval, old groups may have been lost. In the absence of a Study Group Coordinator, the Chair will look after creating Study Groups.

6. Date of next meeting

The date of the next committee meeting will (provisionally) be 12th September 2021 @ 2.30pm, via Google Meet.